

The President's Daily Brief

May 14, 1975

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LATE ITEM

Laotian student demonstrators occupied the USAID office in Savannakhet this morning, capturing three US citizens whom they are holding at the governor's office. Demonstrators also vandalized the USAID office in the royal capital of Luang Prabang this morning.

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May 14, 1975

Table of Contents

Cambodia: The crewmen of the Mayaguez may have been moved to the mainland. (Page 1)

Netherlands: 25X1
(Page 2) 25X1

South Korea: President Pak yesterday issued a sweeping new emergency decree. (Page 5)

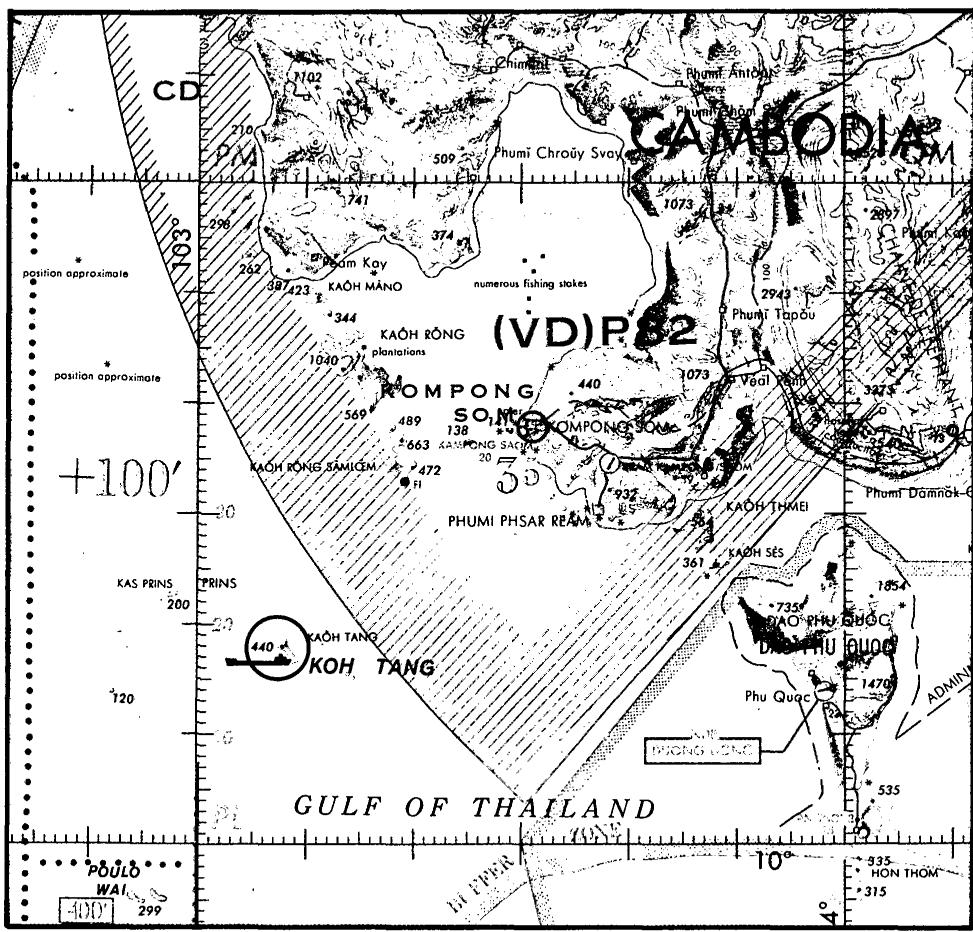
Laos: The communists are rapidly assuming control of all coalition government activities. (Page 6)

China-Vietnam: Peking's relations with Hanoi have been further strained by incidents in the Spratly and Paracel islands, which both countries claim. (Page 7)

Palestinians: Palestinian leaders are questioning the extent of Soviet backing. (Page 8)

Notes: USSR; Greece-Turkey; Cyprus; Israel (Pages 10 and 11)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY



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CAMBODIA

The Mayaguez is still anchored near Koh Tang Island, some 30 miles from the port of Kompong Som. Most of the crewmen were apparently transferred to the island early yesterday, and at least some of them now appear to have been moved to the mainland.

The number of communist patrol boats in the area has increased to more than two dozen. Several have been sunk or damaged by US aircraft. The US planes continue being shot at by small arms from the patrol boats and from Koh Tang Island.

In the first public Chinese response to the incident, Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping told newsment in Paris that "there is nothing China could do" should the US elect to use force to free the ship and the crewmen. Teng said he is unaware of any Chinese mediatory role.

Moscow, in a Tass dispatch yesterday, noted the movement of the US naval task force toward the Gulf of Thailand. It added that the Mayaguez, "according to some reports, was engaged in intelligence activities."

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NETHERLANDS

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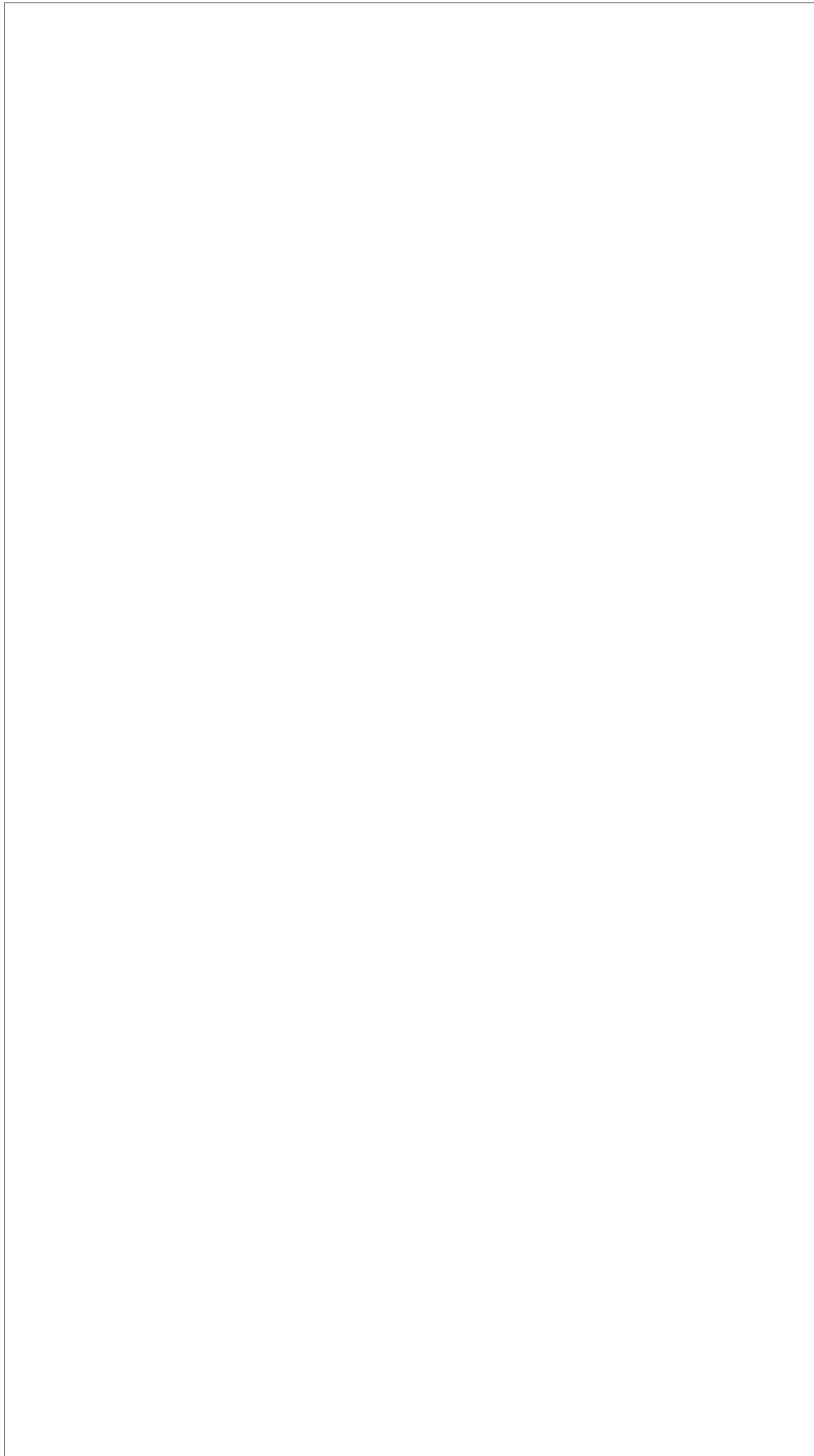
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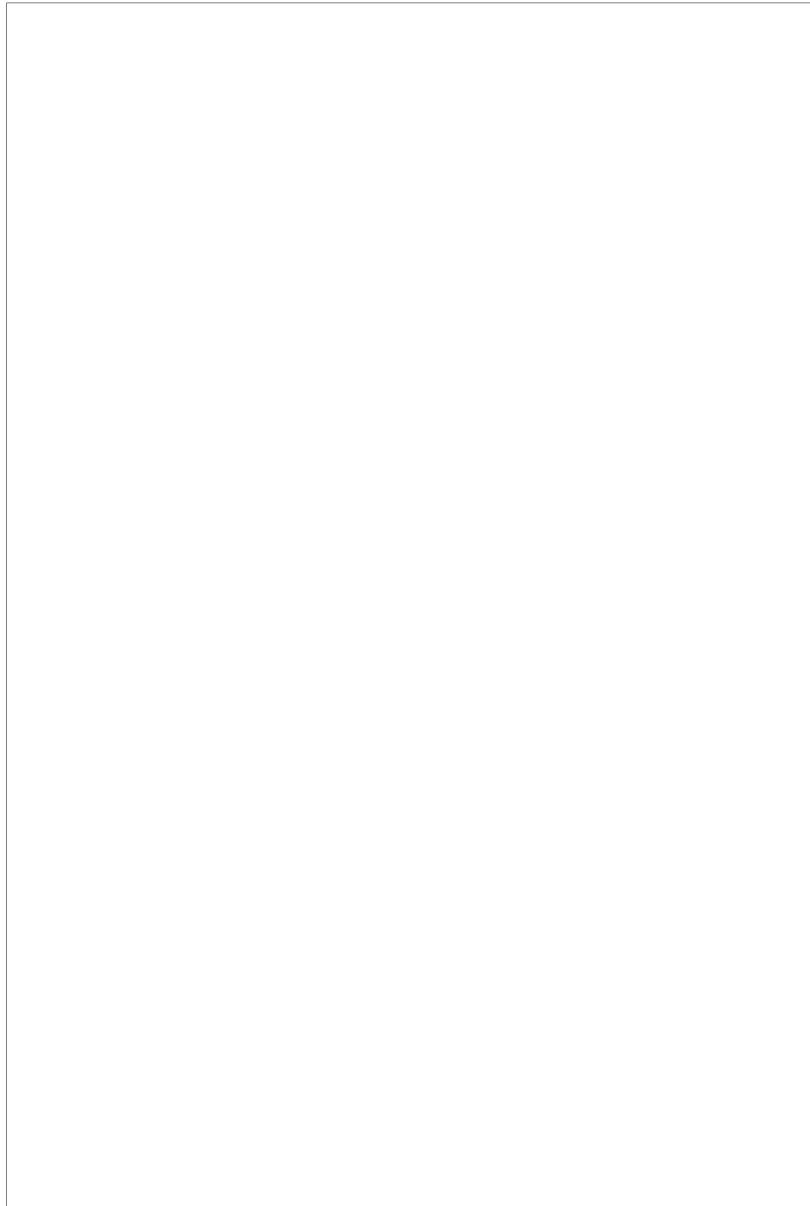
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SOUTH KOREA

President Pak yesterday issued a sweeping new emergency decree that bans any criticism of the authoritarian 1972 constitution, the spreading of "false rumors," student political activity, and any statement against the new decree itself. Pak has apparently concluded that it is more important for him to maintain strong defenses against his domestic opponents in the South and the enemy in the North, than to satisfy critics of his policies, including those in the US.

The decree is in line with a recent trend toward tougher domestic controls by the Pak government. Pak's most vocal opponents have been closing ranks in support of the regime in order to avoid giving a wrong signal to the North in the wake of events in Indochina and North Korean President Kim Il-song's visit to Peking.

Moreover, Pak's adversaries fear imprisonment, need time to regroup and assess US reactions, and do not want to appear irresponsible in the face of uncertainty about Pyongyang's intentions. Over time, however, these new repressive measures are certain to stir more debate and more protest.

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LAOS

The communists are rapidly assuming control over all coalition government activities. Royal Lao Army units [redacted] are offering no resistance to orders from the acting communist defense minister, General Khammouane Boupha.

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Communist officials in Vientiane are attempting to regulate the country's commercial activities and the movements of foreigners. The tone of their regulations is harsh and, in the US embassy's judgment, the regulations probably are the "ominous" beginning of more stringent controls yet to come.

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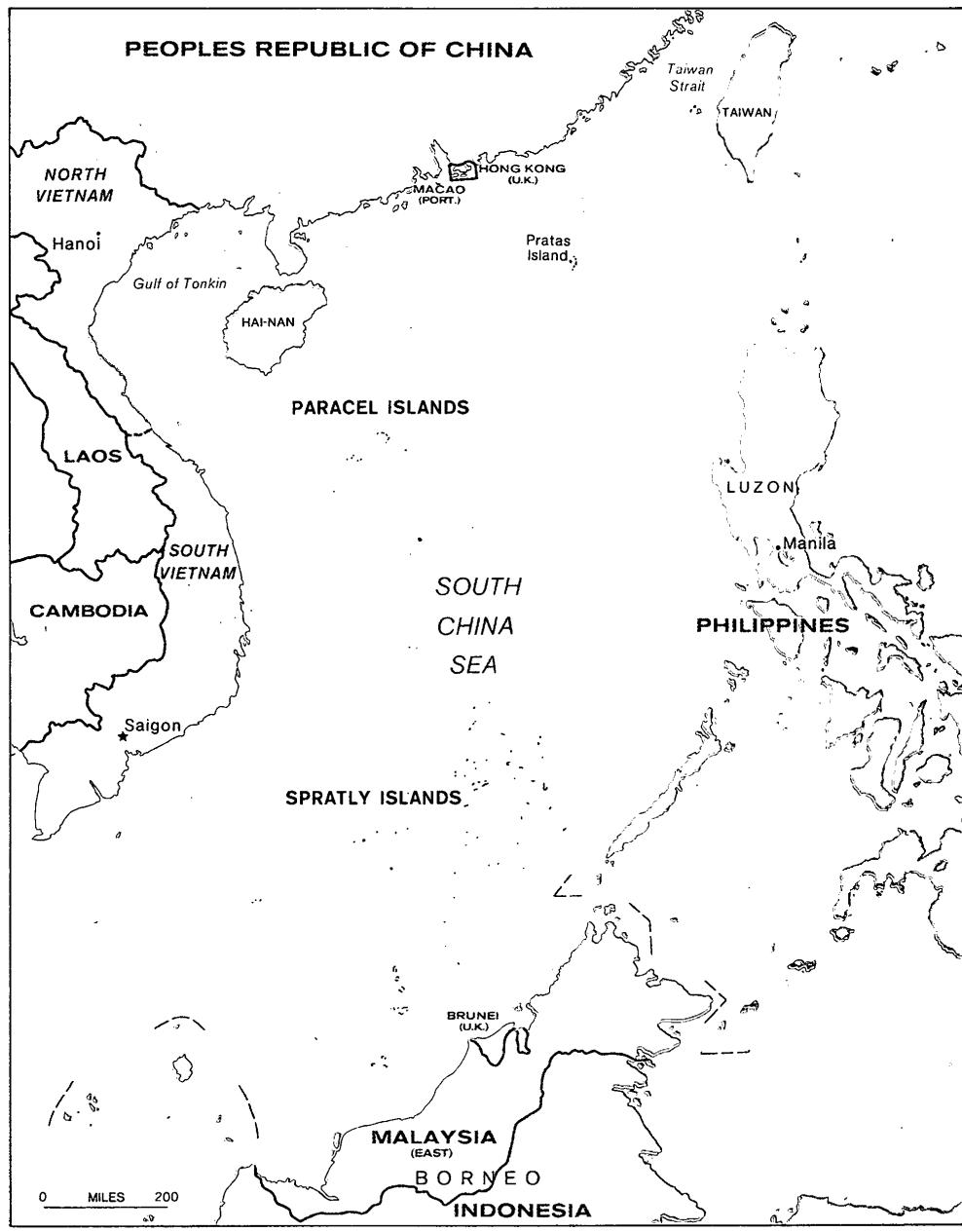
General Vang Pao flew to exile in Thailand early today. Yesterday, he refused efforts by a delegation of the International Control Commission to persuade him to go to Vientiane for a meeting with Souvanna and Khammouane Boupha. He said, however, that he would not offer further resistance to the government.

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Communist-inspired civil unrest in the southern rightist stronghold of Pakse has apparently ended, and the coalition government has agreed to virtually all of the protesters' demands. Those demands included the designation of southern Laos as a "neutralized" area under the direct administration of the coalition and the ouster of nearly two dozen senior rightist officials.

The situation in the Mekong River city of Savannakhet--another rightist stronghold--remains tense and could easily deteriorate into a situation similar to that in Pakse.

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CHINA-VIETNAM

Peking's relations with Hanoi have been further strained by recent incidents in the Spratly and Paracel islands, which both countries claim.

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China has remained silent about the Vietnamese communists' seizure from South Vietnam in mid-April of six of the Spratly Islands.

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the Spratlys [redacted] are located beyond the effective range of Chinese air cover. We see no sign that China plans to contest militarily the Vietnamese occupation of the six Spratly islands, but it is clear that Peking is as irritated by that action as Hanoi was by the Chinese occupation of the Paracels in January 1974.

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Other islands in the Spratly group are garrisoned by Philippine and Nationalist Chinese troops. So far, they have not been challenged. The Philippines and Nationalist China also claim the Paracels.

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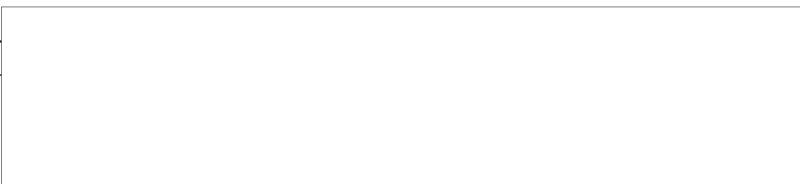
PALESTINIANS

The meager results of Yasir Arafat's recent trip to Moscow have prompted some Palestinian leaders to question the extent of Soviet backing for the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Palestinians are particularly concerned over Moscow's attempts to elicit from them some recognition of Israel in return for an invitation to the Geneva talks.

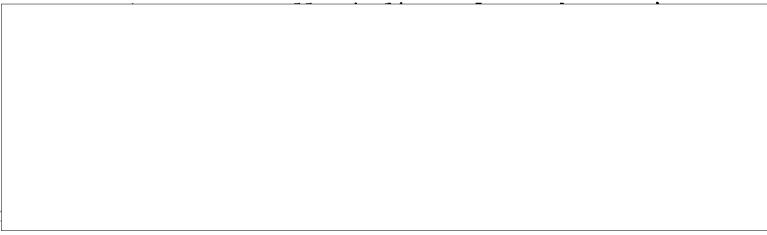
The Palestinians suspect that the Soviets may be working with the US to minimize their role at Geneva. The purpose, the Palestinians think, would be to satisfy the demands of Egypt and Syria without forcing the Israelis to boycott the next session of talks.

In the communiqué issued at the end of his Moscow visit, Arafat in effect acknowledged that the Palestinians would go to Geneva if invited to participate "on an equal footing" with the other parties. This statement implies willingness to negotiate with Israel, and represents--in Palestinian eyes--a significant concession.

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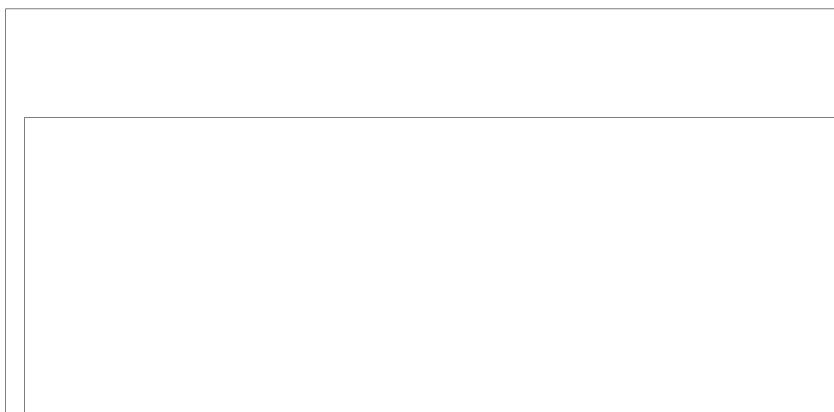
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In an attempt to minimize the damage to Arafat's reputation and draw attention away from the embarrassing lack of concrete accomplishments, PLO spokesmen and information media are describing Arafat's visit to the USSR as the "most successful ever." Pro-fedayeen newspapers in Beirut claim that the long-delayed opening of the PLO office in Moscow will take place in two weeks, and allege that the Soviets promised a variety of unspecified economic, military, and political assistance to the Palestinians.

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NOTES



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The possibility of an incident in the Aegean has risen once again.

The Greeks are concerned that Turkey will again violate the airspace over the eastern Aegean islands

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Prospects for an early solution to the Cyprus problem have turned dim again. Deliberations in Nicosia on the powers and functions of the proposed federal government got off to a poor start.

Turkish Cypriot negotiator Denktash boycotted the opening session on Monday. His delegation was not prepared to discuss substantive issues at the meeting and committed itself only to "try" to have some tentative proposals ready for today's session. Lack of progress in the Nicosia talks will hamper the second round of Cyprus discussions in Vienna under the aegis of UN Secretary General Waldheim.

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